

McMillan Sand Filtration Site

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PARAMETERS Historic Overview Collage

McMILLAN PLAN - 1901 Emerald Necklace of Parks

The McMillan Plan, best known for establishing the design of the present-day Federal Mall also contained plans for city beautification throughout the Nation's Capital. The "Emerald Necklace" was a greenway plan to connect existing open spaces as a series of parks that included the McMillan Reservoir as one such green space. The entire water works including the 40-acre reservoir and the 25-acre filtration plant were included, not as a recreation park, but as green space that is open to the public. The McMillan Commission, named for Senator James McMillan, proposed the Plan and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. is generally credited with the Emerald Necklace concept.

Public Parks
Grounds Open to the Public
(Not Primarily Intended as a Park)



McMILLAN PARK - 1926



McMILLAN FOUNTAIN by Sculptor Herbert Adams
After the death of Senator McMillan in 1902, the 50-acre grounds of the filtration plant were named McMillan Park and a plan for improvements was made by F.L. Olmsted, Jr. The fountain shown above was placed on the most prominent location in the park overlooking the reservoir, and sidewalks access with stairways were placed at the perimeter of the 25-acre filtration plant. Since the waterworks function took precedence over park design, active park facilities were planned south of the reservoir and the filtration plant site was used for passive activities. Improvements on the filtration site were limited to walkways and planting designed by Olmsted. Small trees and shrubs were used to outline the perimeter walks at the edges of the filter cells to limit root intrusion. Olmsted was impressed by the open filter planes with the regular spacing of manholes and proposed a simple cover of grass to maintain this visual feature. The Park was closed to the public in 1941 due to war security concerns for the water source and it has remained closed ever since. The fountain was removed from its original location for water storage improvements.



AERIAL RENDERING OF THE McMILLAN PLAN MALL DESIGN



FILTRATION PLANT SHOWN DURING EXCAVATION



FILTRATION PLANT SHOWN DURING CONSTRUCTION

CLEAN WATER FOR THE NATION'S CAPITAL

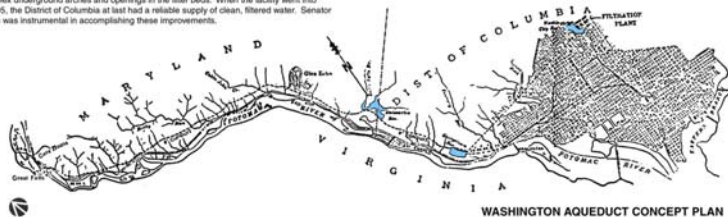
McMillan Reservoir, including the 25-acre filtration site, is considered historically important for planning significance, landscape significance, as well as engineering significance. The waterworks has been designated a Washington City Landmark, and since it was the first water treatment facility for the Nation's Capital, it also has landmark status designated by the American Water Works Association. The sand filtration beds represented a significant achievement in purifying the Washington water supply. At the time of their completion, the sand filtration facility was the largest of its kind in the United States.

Providing clean water from the tap is a convenience many take for granted, but it required decades of expense and construction to achieve. McMillan Reservoir and the treatment plant was one component of an extensive plan to supply drinking water from the Potomac River via the Washington Aqueduct as shown below. Although the connection from the Great Falls river intake to the Dalecarlia and Georgetown Reservoirs was completed in 1903, extending the water supply to areas east of Rock Creek did not occur until much later. In 1902 the four-mile tunnel from the Georgetown Reservoir, spanning a deep Rock Creek valley, was completed to the new McMillan Reservoir enabling Potomac River water to be distributed to the entire city.

The reservoir at the McMillan site was constructed over the productive spring that previously provided drinking water for the downtown Federal buildings. Construction of the sand filtration beds was difficult requiring the removal of up to 35' of soil in places. Specially constructed concrete forms were used to create the complex underground arches and openings in the filter beds. When the facility went into operation in 1903, the District of Columbia at last had a reliable supply of clean, filtered water. Senator James McMillan was instrumental in accomplishing these improvements.



LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY OLMSTED - c.1908



WASHINGTON AQUEDUCT CONCEPT PLAN

McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration Plant Site

Washington D.C., NW • District of Columbia Office of Planning • Summer 2000

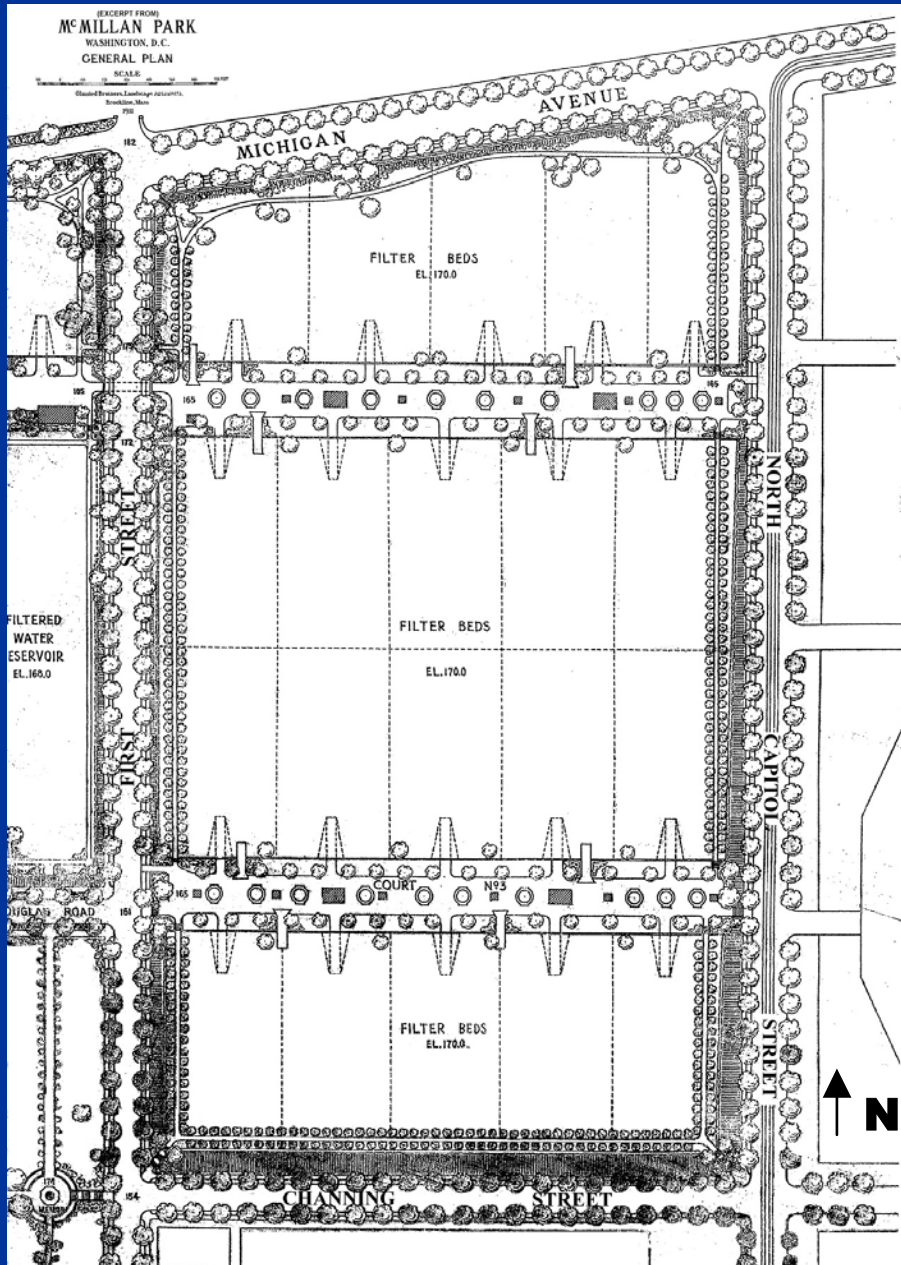
HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

SCALE
AS SHOWN



McMillan Sand Filtration Site

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PARAMETERS



- Built structures above and below ground on 25-acre site are historic
- On the DC Inventory of Historic Sites
- Listing of site on National Register is pending
- Ongoing consultation process established by MOA w/ US Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (allowed sale to District)

Planting Scheme by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.